

# Disseminating Research for Non-Academic Audiences

## Background

Specific Learning Disabilities, or SLD's, have been researched for decades. Specifically, reading comprehension disabilities and oral language disabilities have been researched extensively, and many studies produce strong empirical findings. This includes research completed in the Florida Learning Disabilities Research Center, which, between 2006 and 2023, produced over 400 journal articles, which are the main focus of the current study. Generally speaking, Specific Learning Disabilities research focuses on brain-based disorders (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia) affecting reading, writing, and math, with a strong emphasis on neurobiology, early identification, and evidence-based interventions. Regarding research dissemination, the biggest obstacle is that research findings often do not reach educators or policymakers effectively for a variety of reasons. Knowledge translation (moving research into practice) is a known challenge in education and policy research. This means that research quality alone does not determine whether findings influence practice; there must be an issue in how the research findings are communicated to their intended audiences. Clarity is essential for the uptake of research findings in non-academic audiences.

Although there is research on both dissemination and SLD's, we do not clearly understand what makes research easier to translate for non-academic audiences, or what characteristics increase storytelling or communication potential. Existing research only evaluates quality and doesn't measure communicability or storytelling readiness, which could be the reason there is little or no standardized framework that measures narrative accessibility. Lastly, there is limited empirical work on how metadata influences dissemination potential. This study works to fill all of these current gaps in the body of knowledge surrounding dissemination by introducing the concept of Storytelling Potential measured by a structured 15-point Storytelling Score (Brown, 2026). This study will connect research quality with dissemination readiness and identify features linked to stronger knowledge translation.

The purpose of this study is to identify which features of research studies are most strongly associated with high storytelling potential. This will allow us to better understand what makes research more accessible and impactful beyond academic journals, and ultimately guide researchers in designing studies that communicate findings more effectively.

## Methods

The data sources for this study are journal articles published by researchers from the Florida Learning Disabilities Research Center (LDRC). We used a subset of studies, specifically, those authored or co-authored by Dr. Sara Hart. These are the articles with corresponding numbers in the LDRC 338 (Hart, 2013), 384 (Hart, 2024), 380 (Hart, 2021), and 393 (Hart, 2023).

The main unit of measurement that this study will be evaluating the research studies on is the Storytelling Score. This can be defined by the availability of or potential for storytelling assets (quotes, visuals, clear use cases) and whether the study can be developed into a story with minimal follow-up. This will be measured on a 15-point scale based on six components: Strength of effect sizes, Relevance to practitioners, Level of dissemination, Early Career Researcher (ECR) involvement, Narrative hook, and Overall storytelling readiness. These components will be evaluated based on aspects of the study. Specifically, structural elements, framing, communication clarity, and potential indicators of real-world relevance

The procedures for this study began with first evaluating a variety, roughly 60, studies to familiarize the researcher with the use of the AI agent in the analysis of studies. Next, the researcher chose 4 research papers by Dr. Hart. Then, applying the AI-assisted evaluation framework to those studies to assign a storytelling score to each study. Next, the researcher analyzed those 4 studies personally, extracting metadata and listing specific aspects, framework, diction, and formatting choices in the study. The researcher also utilized the AI agent to help confirm the impact of those choices. Lastly, the researcher compared metadata characteristics to assigned scores. Identifying patterns associated with higher storytelling potential.

The data analysis for this study involved the AI-generated scoring system based on the components previously mentioned. The next part of the analysis was the comparative analysis of metadata features, followed by the identification of relationships between study characteristics and storytelling Scores. Finally, the ranking or weighting of components contributing to high scores was completed to understand which components most strongly contributed to high storytelling scores. Final results will determine which characteristics are most strongly associated with higher Storytelling Potential.

## Articles Reviewed in this Study and their Respective Storytelling Scores

Article	Score	Key Features
338	14	Strong narrative hook, clear practitioner relevance, small but interpretable effect sizes, ready-to-use storytelling assets.
384	12	Equity and open science framing, highly actionable for researchers, real-world use cases, ready storytelling assets, no empirical effect sizes.
380	~12	Strong narrative challenging assumptions, actionable research tools, medium-high practitioner relevance, no new empirical outcomes.
393	9	Clear conceptual focus and theoretical grounding, but narrow audience, no new empirical outcomes, limited storytelling assets.

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### Results/Conclusions

Across the reviewed studies, Storytelling Scores ranged from 9 to 14, reflecting differences in narrative potential, practitioner relevance, effect sizes, and readiness for dissemination. Article 338 scored highest (14) due to a strong narrative challenging the dominance of randomized controlled trials, clear practitioner relevance through reading outcomes and teacher quality, small but interpretable effect sizes, and story-ready assets such as visual scenarios. Articles 384 and 380 scored 12, benefiting from strong thematic hooks, actionable guidance for researchers or methodological tools, and real-world examples, despite lacking new empirical outcomes. Article 393 scored lowest (9) because it was primarily conceptual, targeted a narrow audience, and lacked empirical data or storytelling assets. Key takeaways include that strong narrative framing, practitioner and policy relevance, and ready-to-use storytelling assets are the most consistent predictors of higher storytelling scores, while small effect sizes, theoretical-only content, and indirect classroom relevance limit a study's story potential.

The research aimed to identify factors that contribute to the storytelling potential of education research studies, operationalized through the Storytelling Score.

Findings highlight which characteristics make a study more likely to translate into compelling stories for practitioners, policymakers, and funders. Results show that studies with strong narrative hooks, actionable insights, and built-in storytelling assets can achieve feature-ready status even when empirical effects are modest. The analysis guides prioritizing research for public-facing dissemination, helping the LDRC team identify studies that are both credible and engaging.

While trends are evident, additional studies could strengthen conclusions about which factors most consistently predict high storytelling potential. The research is ongoing, particularly in refining operational definitions for "storytelling readiness" and testing these patterns across a larger corpus of studies.

The analysis systematically scored multiple dimensions of storytelling potential and combined quantitative scores with qualitative insights, highlighting what makes research story-ready. Limitations include a small sample of studies, some subjectivity in scoring factors like narrative strength, and minimal impact from factors such as dissemination gap or ECR spotlight. Lack of direct classroom outcomes in several studies also reduced applicability for practitioners.

### Interpretation of Dissemination Levels

Value	Meaning
Low	The study is little-known, undercited, or has not been translated into practitioner-friendly formats. Few—if any—people outside the research community are aware of it.
Medium	The study is known within academic or policy circles. It may have been shared in a conference, cited in multiple papers, or included in a professional learning setting, but has not been broadly amplified or turned into public-facing content.
High	The study has already been widely shared or cited, included in guides, tools, professional development sessions, or media. Practitioners and stakeholders are likely to be more familiar with it, or it may be considered a "flagship" work of the LDRC. (i.e., Open Science

### Interpretation of Storytelling Scores

What the Storytelling Measures
<i>Rather than summarizing research quality alone, this score captures a study's "story worthiness"—its potential to connect rigorous evidence to lived experience, professional action, or policy relevance. It answers the question: "Can this study become a compelling, credible, and usable story for someone who wasn't part of the research team?"</i>
The scoring system integrates the following components:
<b>1. Effect Size Strength (0-3)</b>
Whether the study demonstrated meaningful or strong effects. Stronger results increase the likelihood of a persuasive narrative.
<b>2. Practitioner Relevance (0-3)</b>
The degree to which the findings are usable, actionable, or meaningful to classroom educators, coaches, school leaders, or interventionists.
<b>3. Dissemination Gap (0-3)</b>
A reverse score: the <i>less</i> known the study is, the <i>more</i> storytelling potential it has. A high score here indicates a missed opportunity for visibility.
<b>4. ECR Spotlight (0-2)</b>
Studies led or substantially contributed to by early career researchers are prioritized to support LDRC's commitment to developing research talent and surfacing underrecognized contributions.
<b>5. Narrative Strength (0-2)</b>
Whether the study naturally lends itself to a broader theme or "hook"—such as equity, bilingualism, innovation, or instructional transformation.
<b>6. Storytelling Potential (Readiness) (0-2)</b>
Availability of or potential for storytelling assets (quotes, visuals, clear use cases) and whether the study can be developed into a story with minimal follow-up.
The <b>maximum score is 15</b> . A study scoring between <b>13-15</b> is considered " <b>feature-ready</b> ," while scores of <b>10-12</b> suggest <b>strong potential</b> with minimal development. Lower scores (7-9) may require additional framing or are better suited for background use or internal synthesis.

### Discussion/Limitations

This study examined which characteristics of education research studies are associated with higher storytelling potential. The findings suggest that storytelling readiness is driven more by narrative framing, practitioner relevance, and clear real-world implications than by the size of empirical effects alone. Studies that included strong narrative hooks, classroom relevance, or identifiable storytelling assets were more likely to receive higher Storytelling Scores and be suitable for public-facing dissemination.

In contrast, studies that were primarily theoretical or narrowly targeted to academic audiences showed lower storytelling potential due to limited real-world context or communication-ready elements. These results suggest that research design and framing may influence how easily findings translate to practitioners and policymakers.

Since this analysis included a small number of studies and relied partly on qualitative judgment in scoring narrative strength, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary. Expanding the sample and refining the Storytelling Score framework may help clarify which features most consistently support effective knowledge translation.

### Future Steps

Future research should expand the sample of studies to address limitations in the current analysis, including the small number of articles reviewed and the subjective scoring of factors like narrative strength. Additional work could test whether findings generalize across more diverse research designs and topics. Incorporating empirical outcomes or visual storytelling assets may enhance feature-readiness, while examining dissemination strategies could improve translation of high-scoring research into public-facing narratives. Refining operational definitions for storytelling readiness and systematically evaluating how combinations of factors produce "feature-ready" stories will help address gaps and ensure that future studies more robustly capture what makes research story-worthy for practitioners, policymakers, and broader education audiences.

Works cited and Acknowledgements accessible via QR code:

